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Leatherman Squirts Mini Multi-tools

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Description :

A review of the smaller Leatherman models.

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Introduction

The Leatherman Tool Group, Inc. got their start back in June of 1983 and they've been cranking out revolutionary products ever since. You may not be aware of the fact, but Leatherman was the originator of the very first multi-tool. Everything that's come since owes its existence to that first Leatherman design (and that's pretty obvious when you take a look at the form factor of most of their competitors tools). The Leatherman Tool Group sells in over 80 countries worldwide and controls over 50% of the domestic market today. They're certainly the force to be reckoned with in the multi-tool world.

For this review I took a look at both the S4 and P4 versions of their Squirt multi-tool. Let's take a look and see what these pint-sized tool chests have to offer!

Description and Features

Squirt P4

The first tool I looked at was the Squirt P4. In this case the "P" stands for pliers, as that's the main tool on this particular model. Here's the rundown of factory specs and features for the P4:

Length: 2.25 in. / 5.5 cm closed Weight: 2 ounces / 57 grams Materials: Stainless steel with anodized aluminum scales Patents/Trademarks: Patents Pending in U.S. and other countries Available Colors: Storm (gray), Glacier (blue), Inferno (red)

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Needlenose Pliers, Straight Knife, Wire Cutters, Extra Small Screwdriver, Medium Screwdriver, Small Flat Phillips, Screwdriver, Single-Cut File, Cross-Cut File, Opener, Lanyard Attachment, Awl

Squirt S4

The S4 is the same size and form factor as the P4, however, the pliers have been replaced with a set of scissors and some of the other tools vary as well. Here are the specs for the S4 for comparison to the P4 above:

Length: 2.25 in. / 5.5 cm closed Weight: 2 ounces / 57 grams Materials: Stainless steel with anodized aluminum scales Patents/Trademarks: Patents Pending in U.S. and other countries Available Colors: Storm (gray), Glacier (blue), Inferno (red)

Scissors, Straight Knife, Tweezers, Extra-Small Screwdriver, Medium Screwdriver, Small Flat Phillips, Screwdriver, Nail File/Cleaner, Opener, Lanyard Attachment, Ruler

General Impressions

The first thing you notice about the Squirts are their brightly colored, anodized scales. The P4 came in blue and the S4 is a charming and easy to see red. Once you move past the color you realize these things are small. You can see in the above pics some comparison photos showing the Squirt P4 next to my beat up old SAK and my older Leatherman Micra (a good mini-tool in it's own right). Suffice it to say, the Squirt is a puny little bugger.

One thing that's apparent upon closer examination of the Squirts is that they're very well made. Even in comparison to the earlier Leathermans like the Micra and the original PST tool. They have a very smooth action to them and just

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seem a bit more refined. Everyone I showed them to commented on this (after they were done "ooo-ing" and "aww-ing" over the colorful handle scales anyway). Even my father in law, who is a tool and die maker by trade and very particular about his tools, was particularly impressed with the Squirts construction and operation. That's pretty high praise. Fit and finish on the tools is very good and operation is smooth and positive. It's a far cry from what you see with many of the economy tools out there.

Either model could be easily carried around in your pocket without notice or attached to your key-ring by the handy lanyard attachment. That's probably the main beauty of these tools: they're small enough to always be there when you need them. It's going to be pretty hard to use the excuse that they were too cumbersome for you to carry around!

Let's move on and talk about the actual function of these little buggers and how they perform...

Hands On Evaluation

Testing

I used the Squirts on a variety of projects over a two week period including the removal and installation of a new sound card from my PC. While they don't have a standard Phillips head screwdriver they do have a flat unit, described as a "flat Phillips", that's tapered to allow it slip into a Phillips head screw. While I might prefer a real Phillips I have to admit this actually worked okay on the size screws common to PC cases and expansion ports and should work on other items just as well.

One thing I did find out was that the handle is a bit short if you need to get to a hard to reach screw. This was pretty easily remedied though by opening up one side of the tool and, in essence, increasing the length of the handle. This actually worked out pretty well. It made it easier to get down inside of items like computer cases and gave you're

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hand a bit more leverage and torque for loosening and tightening screws.

The pliers on the P4 are surprisingly good for such a small set. While not pointy like most needlenose pliers, they're trim enough to work well in a confined space and delicate enough to snag dropped screws or other tiny objects. The wire cutters at their base work pretty well too and I used them to cut a series of small gauge steel and copper wire with relative ease.

The small knife blade came very sharp and made fast work of nylon webbing and assorting plastic packaging. The remaining tools on the P4 consist of a two different sized flat head screw drivers (including one small enough to work on eyeglass frames), a rather decent file with single cut and cross cut sides, an awl and, the very handy bottle opener.

The S4 substitutes a pair of scissors for the pliers, and a nail file (with ruler on the other side) for the standard file. You also loose the awl in favor of a pair of tweezers.

While I think the P4 is a more useful device for utility use, I did still find the S4 a handy pocket tool for general use, particularly if you work in an office setting or somewhere where scissors would be a boon. I carried the S4 over Christmas and found that it's scissors are actually pretty tough and made short work of the hard plastic packaging common to many retail items these days. Those and the knife blade came in handy a fair bit (as "always on hand" tools when nothing else was readily available).

Portability Factor

Probably the biggest benefit of both of these tools is their small size. I carried both of them in a variety of manners over the past couple of weeks and in most cases I forgot I had them on me until I needed them. Generally I'd just drop them in my pocket and, while I don't normally like things rolling around loose like that, the Squirts are small enough and light enough that they went largely unnoticed. Another thing that became apparent while carrying them was the smooth contours of the tools while closed. There was nothing sharp or rough to catch on your clothing or to dig into your hands when you did reach in your pocket for something.

The lanyard ring on the Squirts allows for the tool to be carried on a key ring as well and that's probably not a bad place for them. They really aren't much bigger or heaver than many other key fobs and that way you're sure to have a tool handy just about any time you walk out of the house.

Conclusion

Both versions of the Squirt are obviously very handy and are small enough that there's no reason for you to ever not have some sort of tools available ever again. With that said, I'd give the nod to the P4 with it's pliers and additional tools over the S4 and it's scissors most of the time. It probably all depends on your needs I guess. For example, my wife liked the S4 a lot actually. She felt the scissors, nail file and tweezers would get much more use for her than the pliers and other tools would. The scissors did come in handy for opening up tough packaging too so they aren't without a certain degree of proper geek utility. Still, the average user would most often be better equipped with the P4 and it's pliers in my opinion.

If you know you're likely to be doing some repair or maintenance work but still don't want to carry a toolkit around, I'd look to something a bit more substantial like Leatherman's intriguing Juice line of multi-tools. They give you some more dedicated tools (including a full sized Phillips screwdriver) and are probably a little more comfortable size to hold and use. However, for the tool that you're always going to have on you when you need it the Leatherman Squirts, and particularly the P4, are real winners.

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